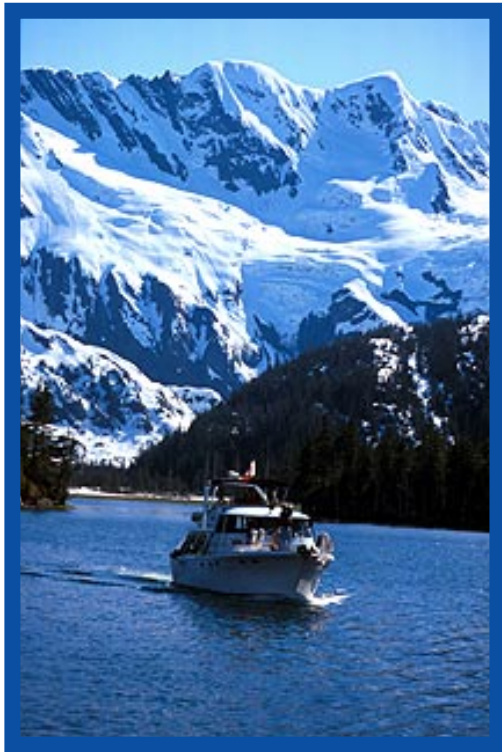


# Prince William Sound Supplement to the Alaska Boater's Handbook



# PWS SUPPLEMENT

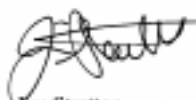
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Dear Alaskan Boater

The Alaska Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation, Office of Boating Safety is pleased to provide you with the Prince William Sound regional supplement to the *Alaska Boater's Handbook*. This, the first in a series, provides Prince William Sound specific boating information including a brief description of the area and local hazard identification. While not all-inclusive, this supplement does offer recommendations for trip preparation, describes access, boating opportunities, and special environmental considerations, and provides a list of contacts and references for more information.

As Alaskans, we know how beautiful and alluring our state can be. We also know just how quickly the elements can change and challenge our outdoor knowledge and skills. I hope this booklet is both useful and interesting in adding to your knowledge of Prince William Sound waters. But most importantly, I hope that your boating adventure is safe and fun.

Safe Boating,



Jim Stratton  
Director



# PWS SUPPLEMENT

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# INTRODUCTION

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Prince William Sound - the very name says adventure, and for good reason. Prince William Sound is one of Alaska's premium outdoor recreation playgrounds. And with the opening of the Whittier Road, that playground has suddenly become a lot more accessible to Alaskans and visitors alike. Spectacular scenery, great fishing and hunting, and a chance for peace and solitude make the Sound immensely attractive to the recreational boater.

The key to enjoyable boating in Prince William Sound is a prudent mix of basic boating education, adequate preparation, knowledge, good equipment, skill, constant vigilance, and good judgement.

## Overview

Prince William Sound is a huge area. The partially sheltered Sound spans nearly 100 miles across, from Whittier to Cordova, and another 100 miles north to south, from Harvard Arm to Montague Strait. It has nearly 7,000 square miles of ocean, river deltas, tidal flats, forests, mountains and glaciers.

Most of the uplands of the Sound are part of the Chugach National Forest, predominantly a dense blanket of coastal old-growth spruce and hemlock forest, interspersed with mile-high mountains and ice fields as big as small states. Although much of the Sound is public, numerous private holdings dot the shorelines, and many of these lands are either off limits or the owners allow access only with prior permission. In addition, access to some public lands is also restricted or prohibited to protect special cultural or biological features. For all practical purposes there are no boating facilities throughout most of the Sound.

The Sound hosts an abundance of marine and upland plants and animals, with deer and bear on the mainland and the major islands, seabirds and sea otters along most of the coastline, and whales throughout. Most streams, other than those too silty from glacial flour, have trout, Dolly Varden, and salmon. Halibut, lingcod and rockfish inhabit the area, though much of the Sound is deep water. While most wildlife and fish are abundant, some species are in decline and harvest is either limited or prohibited. Be sure to check the latest ADF&G regulation books for the rules pertaining to fishing and hunting.

The Sound is sparsely populated, and the towns of Cordova, Valdez, Whittier, Tatitlek, and Chenega are each separated by at least 30 to 40 miles of wilderness waterways. A handful of residents also live at a number of remote fish hatcheries. The total population of the Sound is fewer than 8,000.

## Access

The two access points for boaters are Whittier and Valdez. Boaters can either drive or take the Alaska Railroad to Whittier via the Anton Anderson Memorial Tunnel. The tunnel's west entrance is in Bear Valley near the USFS Begich / Boggs visitor center at Portage Glacier. Maximum size of vehicle or trailer that can use the tunnel, at regular transit times, is 10' wide and 14' high. During special periods a trailer 11' wide and 15' high can pass. For more detailed information, visit the tunnel web site at <http://www.dot.state.ak.us/whittiertunnel/> or call 907-269-6200.

If you prefer to take the train to Whittier contact the Alaska Railroad for schedules and fares at <http://www.alaskarailroad.com/> or call 265-2494 or 800-544-0552.

The other road access to the Sound is via Valdez.



# TRIP PLANNING

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Prince William Sound is a fascinating place. Your library or bookstore has a number of titles on Prince William Sound geology, glaciers, wildlife, history, and of course, the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill. Read up on the places you plan to visit. A little research will yield big rewards.

The range of choices in the Sound is limited only by your imagination and, if you are a power boater, your fuel capacity. From the deep fiords and glaciers of the north to the sandy ocean beaches of the southeast islands, Prince William Sound provides a wide variety of opportunities.

Following is a description of places and facilities that all Prince William Sound boaters should know about:

## Whittier

Whittier sits on a narrow shelf of land between the Chugach Mountains and the deep fiord called Passage Canal. This small town of about 300, about 62 road miles southeast of Anchorage, was established by the US Army during World War II. When the railroad from Whittier to Portage was completed in 1943, Whittier became the main transfer point for troops and supplies in Southcentral Alaska.

The town has a post office, a medical clinic, police and fire departments, a tackle shop, a small grocery store, gas station/fuel dock, a hotel, several restaurants, several B&Bs, and a number of tour companies, charter boats, and kayak rentals. Available marine services include boat watch and boat tow services. No outboard motor repair currently is available. A detailed list of marine services is available at the harbormaster's office.

Whittier harbor has 330 moorage spaces for vessels up to 54' in length, some dry storage space on shore, two tide grids, four launching ramps (two near the harbormaster's office go nearly dry at low tide), a 30-ton marine travel lift, a 2,000-lb dock crane, electricity, fresh water (April-October), pay phones, Kids Don't Float program loaner lifejackets, fish cleaning stations, showers, used oil collection and marine sewage holding tank pump out.

The harbormaster's office is open 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. during the summer and until 5 p.m. in the winter. The staff monitor VHF Ch. 16 and 68. The telephone number is 472-2330 and the fax number is 472-2472. The harbormaster can also be reached by e-mail at [wharbor@alaska.net](mailto:wharbor@alaska.net). The following information was provided by Whittier harbor:

- Pets must be on a leash and owners must clean up after them.
  - When on harbor floats or beach areas, children under 13 should wear PFD's. If under 12, they must be accompanied by an adult.
  - The entire harbor is a no-wake zone.
  - Property left on the floats more than 24 hours will be impounded.
  - Vessels arriving by sea must register with the harbormaster's office within four hours.
  - Vehicles and boat trailers must be removed from launching areas immediately after launching.
  - Fish cleaning is permitted at the established cleaning stations only. Conserve water by turning off faucets at the stations after use.
  - Vessels are required to radio the harbormaster when entering and leaving the harbor.
  - Contact the harbormaster about where to deposit waste oil and old batteries. There is no collection point for used antifreeze so vessel owners must take it out of Whittier.
  - Garbage can be deposited only in the dumpsters at the head of each ramp.
  - Boat holding tanks can be pumped out only at the station on B float or at the mobile pump unit.
  - No oil or fuel discharge is permitted in the harbor and any sheen is reported to the Coast Guard.
  - Owners of boats moored during the winter must arrange for boat watch service.
  - Filing a float plan is strongly encouraged. The harbor has float plan deposit boxes.
- Parking and camping spaces are limited. The city owns parking space for about 300 vehicles, divided among several small parking lots around town. Parking is managed by Alaska Recreational Management. Fees are charged. Clearwater Environmental Inc. also provides parking for a fee.

## Passage Canal

Some boaters, especially those with manually-powered craft or with little open water boating experience, may opt to stay in the Passage Canal area. A leisurely ten-mile cruise inside Passage Canal takes you past a large seabird rookery, several spectacular waterfalls, and breathtaking mountain scenery. If you're lucky, you may spot some seals, porpoises, or even whales.

## State Marine Parks

The State of Alaska, Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation, manages 14 State Marine Parks in Prince William Sound, many with desirable anchorages and campsites. In the Whittier area they are located at:

**Decision Point** near the entrance of Passage Canal, on the south side, 8 miles from Whittier;

**Entry Cove** near the entrance of Passage Canal, on the north side, 10 miles from Whittier;

**Ziegler Cove** three miles northeast of Entry Cove, on the west side of Port Wells;

**Bettles Bay**, 9 miles northeast of Ziegler cove, also on the west side of Port Wells;

**Surprise Cove**, in Cochrane Bay at the south end of Port Wells, 13 miles from Whittier;

**South Esther Island**, Lake and Quilliam bays, on the east side of Port Wells, 19 miles from Whittier;

**Granite Bay**, also on Esther Island, on the east side of Port Wells, about seven miles north of South Esther;

Other State Marine Parks in the Sound are located at:

**Horseshoe Bay**, on Latouche Island, across Latouche Passage from the village of Chenega Bay;

**Shoup Bay** six miles west of Valdez, has three public use cabins for rent, McAllister Creek, Kittiwake Cabin and Moraine Creek. The first two are available all season. Moraine Creek cabin is available to the public before May 15 and after September 1. Because of the resident kittywake colony, personal watercraft, jet boats, hovercraft and float planes are not allowed in the upper bay;

**Sawmill Bay**, 15 miles down Valdez Arm from Valdez, on the west side;

**Jack Bay**, also about 15 miles down Valdez Arm from Valdez, on the east side;



**Canoe Passage**, on Hawkins Island west of Cordova. Note that boats can only enter Canoe Passage from the north end;

**Boswell Bay**, on the east end of Hinchinbrook Island, 20 miles southwest of Cordova. This bay nearly goes dry at low tide;

**Kayak Island**, on the west side of the island, about 50 miles from Cordova.

Most State Marine Parks have sheltered anchorages and attractive surroundings. Some feature improvements including tent platforms, fire rings, outhouses and bear-proof food storage lockers.

Detailed information on State Marine Parks in Prince William Sound is available from the Alaska State Parks Kenai Area office in Soldotna at (907) 262-5581 and on the Web at [www.dnr.state.ak.us/parks/units/pwssmp/smppws.htm](http://www.dnr.state.ak.us/parks/units/pwssmp/smppws.htm). Contact Alaska State Parks at [www.alaskastateparks.org](http://www.alaskastateparks.org) for information concerning cabin use and reservations.

## Chugach National Forest

Chugach National Forest, the second largest in the nation, encompasses most of the uplands of the Sound. The western part of the Sound, from Columbia Glacier, Naked and Knight Islands, down to Bainbridge, is managed by the Forest Service as a Wilderness Study Area. Leave No Trace camping is required and no cabins or other alterations to the landscape are allowed. The Forest Service has three work boats assigned to the Sound plus one law enforcement vessel. Kayak patrols visit camping and cabin sites, monitor use, make minor repairs, and report violations.

Chugach National Forest maintains 15 public use cabins around the Sound, but 5 are accessible only by aircraft. Locations of cabins accessible by boat are as follows:

**Harrison Lagoon**, on the west side of Port Wells, two miles north of Hobo Bay;

**Port Chalmers**, on the southwest side of Montague Island, about 70 miles from Whittier;

**Green Island**, in Montague Strait about 70 miles from Whittier;

**Paulson Bay**, on the west side of Cochrane Bay, 18 miles from Whittier;

**South Culross Passage**, on Picturesque Bay off Culross Passage, 27 miles from Whittier;

**Pigot Bay**, at the head of Pigot Bay, 18 miles from Whittier;

**Schrode Lake**, near Long Bay, off Culross Passage, 25 miles from Whittier;

**Jack Bay**, off Valdez Narrows, 10 miles southwest of Valdez;

**Shelter Bay**, on Hinchinbrook Island, about 40 miles from Cordova;

**Double Bay**, on the north shore of Hinchinbrook Island, 35 miles from Cordova.

Additional information on Forest Service cabins and camping is available from the Glacier Ranger District Office in Girdwood 907-783-3242. Cabin reservations are available toll-free at 877-444-6777 or on the Web at [www.reserveusa.com](http://www.reserveusa.com). Due to heavy demand for cabins in the Sound, most dates are booked months in advance.

## Salmon Hatcheries

Prince William Sound Aquaculture Association is a non-profit corporation supported largely by assessments on the commercial harvest and the proceeds from the sale of the fish caught adjacent to the hatcheries. Commercial fishing takes place during most of the summer, and egg-taking continues into September. There are four remote salmon hatcheries in the Sound:

**Armin F. Koernig (San Juan)**, on Evans Island, a little southwest of Chenega Bay;

**Main Bay**, on the mainland just east of Port Nellie Juan;

**Wally Noerenberg**, the largest hatchery in the Sound, on the south end of Esther Island;

**Cannery Creek**, on the east side of Unakwik Inlet.

When time and personnel permit, the hatcheries welcome small groups of visitors and may even provide a guided tour. To request a visit to a site, visitors should call on VHF Ch. 16, then switch to the hatchery's working frequency as requested.

Hatcheries do not dispense fuel or other supplies. Only the Armin Koernig hatchery has a public telephone. Main Bay and Armin Koernig hatcheries have no dock and the other two have minimal docking space.

## Native Villages

There are two Native villages in the Sound. Chenega Bay, on Evans Island in the extreme southwest corner of the Sound, was established in 1984 by survivors of the 1964 earthquake-generated tsunami that destroyed the original village. The village of about 60 residents features a small boat harbor, dock, a 2500-ft. runway and a small health clinic. A fuel station sells gasoline and diesel fuel, which must be transferred to boats by hand.

Tatitlek is situated on Tatitlek Narrows about 25 miles southwest of Valdez, and is home to about 100 residents. The village has an airstrip and a public dock. Currently there are no stores, marine services, restaurants, or other amenities for visitors in either community.



**WEAR YOUR  
LIFE JACKET!**  
BOAT SMART FROM THE START.

# TRIP PREPARATION

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Your safety, comfort and enjoyment depend on adequate preparation before your trip. Of course, adequate preparation depends on the type of boating you do. Unless you are very experienced with coastal boating, the first step in preparation should be education. Take a good boating and coastal navigation course, such as those offered by the Coast Guard Auxiliary. Look for courses approved by the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators.

Sailing, kayaking and personal watercraft operation require additional skills best learned in courses that are specific to these activities. These activities should not be undertaken without a guide or until you have had training and acquired skills. Various organizations in Anchorage and around the state and nation offer paddling courses. Practice in protected areas first to build skills and confidence before heading out into open water.

Before heading into the Sound, you should be very familiar with your boat and equipment. You should also have learned how to prevent, recognize, and treat hypothermia, how to signal other boats while maneuvering and in conditions with restricted visibility, and how to make a distress call on a marine radio. These are referenced in the *Alaska Boater's Handbook*. Also, learn the navigation Rules of the Road, and how to use your compass, read charts, and plot a course.

## All Boaters

ALWAYS do a thorough **Pre-Departure Check** to insure you are carrying all legally required and recommended safety equipment. A table of the minimum state requirements is on page 15. Check the local weather, and local tides. File a float plan, and stick to it. Brief passengers on the trip plan, the operation of the boat, and the location and use of emergency equipment. The best time to do this is before you leave home, because it may be impossible to obtain forgotten items later on.

Prince William Sound boating essentials include:

- Documentation or a current registration certificate and properly displayed registration numbers and decals.
- A properly sized, wearable life jacket, in good condition, for each person. By law, children under 13 must always wear their life jackets in an open boat or on an open deck. Adults should too. Good swimmers drown every year in Alaska's cold water.
- Except for canoes and kayaks, one throwable Type IV flotation device (Coast Guard-approved seat cushion or life ring) is required if the boat is 16 feet

or longer.

- Loud horn, bell or whistle or other sound producing device.
- Depending on boat size, carry approved visual distress signals such as flares for both day and night use.
- Required navigation lights if operating after dark or in periods of restricted visibility.
- Marine VHF radio (cell phone use in Prince William Sound is limited).
- Compass.
- Marine charts (not topographical or road maps) and tide tables appropriate for the area.
- Manual bailing device (even if you have a bilge pump).
- First aid kit.
- Survival kit, including emergency signals, shelter materials, and some extra food.
- Spare parts, tools and a spare propulsion source such as a spare engine, oars, or paddles.

Also, make sure everyone in your party is prepared for the wet and cool Prince William Sound weather. Layering clothing is the key to comfort, with synthetics and wool preferred over cotton. Take a warm hat, full rain gear, and extra clothing in a waterproof bag.

## Powerboats

- Make sure your boat's design is appropriate for coastal waters. Shallow draft, flat bottom river boats perform poorly on the sometimes rough open water of the Sound.
- If you have an inboard gas engine, have a clean and properly installed backfire flame arrester and adequate ventilation. Ventilation is required if you have permanent fuel tanks.

Every powerboat should also have:

- At least one anchor and chain and ropes for the deep waters of the Sound.
- Tools and spare parts including spark plugs, spare propeller, and a prop nut kit.

# TRIP PREPARATION

- Adequate fuel and oil. Fuel is generally unavailable in the Sound.

Make sure you have enough for your trip plus a healthy reserve in case of deteriorating conditions, disorientation, or the need to loan fuel or tow another boat to safety. Think 1/3 out, 1/3 back, and at least 1/3 spare.

- A water / fuel separator filter installed between the fuel tank(s) and the engine. This is critical when boating in the cool and wet climate of the Sound. There are many ways fuel can become contaminated.

## Paddlers

Prince William Sound's sheltered waters provide some of the finest sea kayaking in the world. A sea kayak is superior to canoe for ocean travel due to a very low center of gravity and covered decks. Canoes are not recommended for the Sound unless they are decked, have extra flotation, and the paddler has extensive experience on coastal waters.

## Personal Watercraft

Personal watercraft (PWC) are increasingly popular on Alaskan waters. Safely and responsibly operated, they can be a very enjoyable way to see parts of Prince William Sound. However, remember, PWC are powerboats, and must meet the same registration and safety equipment requirements and rules of the road as other powerboats.

For more information on preparation, see the *Alaska Boater's Handbook*, or visit the State Office of Boating Safety web page at [www.alaskaboatingsafety.org](http://www.alaskaboatingsafety.org). Also see the USCG publication *Federal Requirements and Safety Tips for Recreational Boats*, or access it on the web at [www.uscgboating.org/reg/reg\\_fr equipReq PFD.asp](http://www.uscgboating.org/reg/reg_fr equipReq PFD.asp).

**Be Cool, Not Cold!**



# STATE EQUIPMENT REQUIREMENTS

Minimum State Safety Equipment Requirements for Boats				
EQUIPMENT	BOATS LESS THAN 16'	BOATS 16' TO LESS THAN 26'	BOATS 26' TO LESS THAN 40'	BOATS 40' TO LESS THAN 65'
<b>PERSONAL FLOATION DEVICES (PFDs)</b>	<p>One USCG approved Type I, II, III or V PFD for each person. All PFDs must be in good and serviceable condition, properly sized for the wearer, and readily accessible.</p> <p>One USCG approved Type I, II, III or V PFD for each person. Except for canoes and kayaks, boats must also have one throwable Type IV (seat cushion or throw ring) device. All PFDs must be in good and serviceable condition, properly sized for the wearer, and readily accessible. Children under 13 must wear USCG approved Type I, II, III, or V PFD in an open boat, on the deck of a boat, or when waterskiing.</p>			
<b>FIRE EXTINGUISHERS</b>	At least one B-I, USCG approved fire extinguisher for all power boats with enclosed engine compartments, living spaces or permanent fuel tanks.		At least two B-I, USCG approved fire extinguishers; OR at least one B-II approved fire extinguisher.	At least three B-I, USCG approved fire extinguishers; OR at least one B-I plus one B-II approved fire extinguishers.
<b>VISUAL DISTRESS SIGNALS</b>	When boating between sunset and sunrise, all boats must carry USCG approved night signals.	Except that manually propelled boats or open sailboats under 26' in length not equipped with propulsion machinery, are not required to carry day signals, boats must carry USCG approved visual distress signals for both day and nighttime use. For pyrotechnic devices (hand-held flares, etc.) a minimum of three must be carried in any combination that adds up to three day and three night signals. Pyrotechnics must be in serviceable condition, not expired, and accessible.		
<b>SOUND PRODUCING DEVICE (BELL/ WHISTLE)</b>	Every vessel less than 12 meters (39.4') in length must carry a whistle or horn, or some other means to make an efficient sound signal. The navigation rules require sound signals to signal intentions and during periods of reduced visibility.			Every vessel 12 meters (39.4') or more in length must carry a whistle or horn and a bell.
<b>VENTILATION</b>	Boats with a permanently installed gasoline engine, closed compartments or permanently installed fuel tanks must be equipped with an efficient natural or mechanical ventilation system.			
<b>BACKFIRE FLAME ARRESTOR</b>	One USCG approved device on each carburetor of all inboard gasoline engines.			
<b>REGISTRATION</b>	Required for undocumented motorized boats, and non-motorized boats 10' and longer. Certificate of Number must be on board boat.			
<b>NAVIGATION LIGHTS</b>	Display required from sunset to sunrise and during periods of reduced visibility. International configuration required (varies with length of vessel).			

# LOCAL HAZARDS

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According to the USCG auxiliary, the most common boating problems in Prince William Sound are disorientation, running out of fuel, mechanical breakdown, and delays due to bad weather.

Getting disoriented is a real possibility in the labyrinth of islands and straits. Combined with restricted visibility due to fog and rain, it is easy for boaters to become confused. Boaters need to carry and use a complete set of marine charts and topographic maps for the area they are in, and good navigation equipment. Besides a compass and charts, navigation instruments such as a depth finder, GPS, chart plotter, and radar are highly recommended. Although a GPS alone will not keep you from getting lost, it can be very useful if used properly. To make full use of its navigation capabilities you must be able to position yourself on a chart, and you must know how to plot a course. When preparing for your trip, find your intended destination on a chart, and locate suitable refuge along the way in case weather worsens or trip plans change.

Buffeted by winds sweeping in from the Gulf of Alaska or pouring off of the glaciers of the Chugach Mountains, the Sound at times experiences dangerous sea conditions. Although the weather is usually good between May and August, weather and water conditions in PWS can change quickly. Strong winds and waves as high as 12 feet can suddenly appear, particularly in exposed areas. If this is the case, find the nearest shelter, be patient, and wait for conditions to improve before continuing. It's not worth risking your life to be on time for an appointment. Some areas require particular vigilance:

In the Passage Canal area, high winds and seas caused by pressure differences between Cook Inlet and Prince William Sound are common in the area between Whittier and Shotgun Cove. These conditions sometimes, though not always, diminish as you approach Trinity and Decision Points from Whittier.

The south end of Port Wells (where Blackstone Bay, Cochrane Bay, Passage Canal, and Wells Passage meet) is known for its occasionally turbulent sea conditions. Glacier originated winds funnel down to Port Wells and mix with the wind and waves originating in the other bays, creating the steep and multidirectional chop known as a “confused” sea. This also occurs in Blackstone and Icy Bays.

Easterly winds, with a long “fetch” can cause rough sea conditions in the relatively open south central area of the Sound.



Tidal changes can create swift currents in narrow passages and significant changes in vertical water levels, especially on mudflats and stream deltas. Beware of strong tidal currents and associated tidal “rips”, especially at entrances of bays and straits and in shallow areas or restricted passages. Tide rips are standing waves caused by strong currents, and cause difficult sea conditions. They are worse when the wind is in opposition to the current. Make sure you carry a tide book.



Prince William Sound was carved by glaciers. Debris fields called moraines are sometimes close to the surface, especially at low tide. These shoals cause boat damage every year, and are located in many areas of the Sound including;

- Barry Arm
- Pakenham Point
- Northwestern entrance to Esther Passage
- Southeastern entrance to Esther Passage
- Northwestern sector of Esther Passage
- Eaglek Bay entrances
- North side entrance to Lake Bay
- North side entrance to Hidden Bay
- North side of Applegate Island
- Crafton Island area
- Entrance to Bay of Isles
- Harrison Lagoon

**Stay well back from the face of glaciers. Calving ice creates an extreme hazard to boaters.**

Icebergs are a constant threat in some parts of the Sound. Only small parts of ice bergs are visible above the water. When icebergs unexpectedly roll, they can quickly capsize or damage a nearby boat. Watch carefully for icebergs, and never attempt to climb on one.

Fallen trees become floating hazards in the Sound. As logs age, they become water soaked, don't ride as high in the water and may be partially submerged and difficult to spot. Logs and other floating debris accumulate on beaches, where they are again floated at high tides. Be particularly vigilant during high tide cycles.

Local hazards in the Sound include other boats. Constant vigilance, and a working knowledge of the navigation "rules of the road", are necessities. Watch out for oil-carrying supertankers and escort tugs, especially along the route between Hinchinbrook Entrance and Valdez. Large vessels maneuver poorly, need miles to stop, and may not even see a small boat directly ahead. Ferries, cruise ships, tour boats, and commercial fishing boats also ply the waters of the Sound; some with surprising speed and/or huge wakes. Slow down and turn into these wakes at an angle, just as you would in big seas.

Stay clear of fishing vessels with gear deployed, or in the act of setting gear. Gillnets may be difficult to see in choppy water; look for the buoy at the far end of the net and a row of white corks between it and the boat. A purse seiner sets its net in a big circle, the opposite end attached to a small power skiff and sometimes to a lead or tie-off on the beach. Be careful not to get inside the set. Crab and shrimp pots are marked with brightly colored floats or buoys, and longlines with buoys and small flags. Buoy lines can stretch long distances just under the surface. Give these a very wide berth. Boaters are financially liable for any damage they cause to fishing nets and gear.

# WEATHER

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To get a marine weather forecast:

- Check your favorite radio station for marine weather (area 2C Prince William Sound) before leaving home.
- Go on the Internet to [www.alaska.net/~nwsfoanc](http://www.alaska.net/~nwsfoanc); press “enter”; go to Marine; then to Prince William Sound, Passage Canal, or Valdez.
- Call the Alaska Weatherline at 1-800-472-0391 and dial 3144 for Prince William Sound or 3145 for Passage Canal.
- Call the National Weather Service in Valdez at 835-4505.
- Tune to 1610 on your car’s AM radio at the tunnel staging area.
- Call the Whittier Harbormaster’s office at 472-2330.
- Use the push-button weather box at the Whittier triangle kiosk.
- On your VHF radio, tune to WX-2 in the Whittier and Cordova areas, and WX-1 in the Valdez area for the continuous weather broadcast.
- For larger boats that carry HF-SSB radio, monitor 4125 MHz for Coast Guard and National Weather Service broadcasts.
- On your marine VHF, listen to Ch 16 for scheduled marine broadcast announcements or call the Coast Guard in Valdez on Ch 16 and request a weather forecast. Times of scheduled marine weather broadcasts during the summer in the Sound are as follows:

Naked Island	5:15am
Point Pigot	5:33am
Naked Island	9:15am
Point Pigot	9:33am
Naked Island	1:15pm
Point Pigot	1:33pm
Naked Island	5:15pm
Cordova/Pigot	5:33pm
Naked Island	11:15pm
Cordova/Pigot	11:33pm



# ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

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For all its rugged beauty, Prince William Sound is delicate. Even unintentional acts can pollute the water, mar the land, or disturb fish and wildlife to the point that they may suffer stress, interruptions in essential activity, or even reproductive failure. Responsible boaters need to learn what is there, what needs protecting, and practice ways to avoid harming the land, water, or wildlife of the Sound.

## Don't Pollute

- Use oil sorbants in your bilge and consider an oil-sensitive pump switch to keep oil from going into the water. Even a small amount of oil on the feathers of a seabird can kill it or its developing embryo.
- Take care when fueling. Keep oil sorbent pads handy to prevent fuel spills.
- Federal law prohibits dumping sewage holding tanks into the water.
- Garbage, including food scraps, can choke seabirds and can attract predators to the beach nesting areas of shore birds. Bring all garbage back to town and dispose properly in dumpsters. Don't dump anything overboard.
- Collect all discarded fishing line, which can entangle and kill birds and other marine animals.

**Keep in mind that many species are still recovering from the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill.**

## Tread Lightly

- Camp on the beach or other gravel areas above the high tide line (provided that there are no shorebirds nesting there).
- Avoid walking on sensitive terrain, such as muskeg. Use developed trails wherever possible.
- Wash at least 200 feet away from water sources. Use biodegradable soap.
- Use a gas stove for cooking instead of a fire. If you must make a fire, build it only on bare gravel or rock, use only with dead wood, and erase all traces of fire afterward.
- Avoid damaging live trees and plants.
- Dispose of fish waste in the sea, well below the low tide line.
- "Naturalize" your campsite after use by re-dispersing natural materials used, brushing over tracks, etc.

- Leave all plants, rocks, antlers, fossils and all cultural artifacts in place.
- Keep food in air-tight, preferably bear-proof, containers, and never eat or place food in your tent or sleeping area. Use food storage lockers provided at developed campsites.

## Don't Disturb Wildlife

- Observe all wildlife from a considerate distance, with binoculars or spotting scope. If your presence causes a change in behavior, you are too close.
- Don't chase or try to corner animals to get a photo.
- Never feed wildlife.
- Keep pets under physical control at all times
- Respect and avoid nests, dens and resting places.
- Never handle, touch or even approach young birds or animals. Most likely they are not abandoned but only left in place while the mother seeks food.
- On beaches, avoid walking on barnacles, mussels and other invertebrate animals. If you turn over rocks, do it slowly and gently, and replace after looking. Avoid handling beach creatures.
- Nesting bald eagles (May through August) are sensitive to noise and may abandon an active nest if disturbed.
- Nesting shorebirds may withdraw from nests if humans come near, leaving eggs or chicks vulnerable to weather and predators. Often shorebirds are shy or inconspicuous, and people may be unaware of the presence of nesting territories. Squawking birds overhead, or feigned "broken wing" behavior, often indicates that concealed nests are nearby. Stay aware, particularly on gravel or rock beaches. Beaches are particularly at a premium in the Sound, because the percentage of shoreline that is gravel beach is quite low. Step carefully and leave the area if you suspect breeding birds are present.

## Marine Mammals

- Sea lions, listed under the Endangered Species Act are federally protected. Avoid the Steller sea lion haul-outs.
- Seals, sea lions and sea otters are most vulnerable to disturbance during pupping (May to July) and molting (late summer and fall). Forcing them



**The Marine Mammal Protection Act** prohibits harassment of all marine mammals, and defines harassment to include any disturbance or disruption of behavior including breeding, migrating, and feeding. Anything a person does that causes a marine mammal to enter the water, flee, change its position on the beach or even alter its breathing rhythm can be considered disturbance.

into the water, or preventing them from “hauling out”, may cause critical energy loss, pup-mother separation, or even injury to pups. Never closely approach hauled out seals or sea lions, and avoid detection by sight, sound or smell. Maintain a slow, steady parallel-to-shore course while in their vicinity.

- Even if no obvious disturbance is detected, approach marine mammals in the water no closer than 100 yards.

- Limit the time spent observing any particular animal(s) to one-half hour.
- Never herd, encircle, or corner animals between the boat and shore.

Always allow them an escape route.

- If approached by a whale, put the engine in neutral, keep it running, and let the animal swim past. If you need to cross the route of a whale, pass behind it.

- Avoid excessive speed or abrupt changes in speed or course while in the vicinity of marine mammals.

- Stay back from breaching or flipper slapping whales, and from the “bubble curtains” emitted by humpback whales underwater to herd food. Humpback whales navigate by sound, not sonar. If they are focused on feeding, they could unknowingly either come up underneath or down upon the boat.

- Quietly but immediately leave the area if animals show signs of disturbance. In seals and sea lions that could include behavior relative to the disturbance, herd movement toward or into the water, increased vocalization, simultaneous head-raising, or increased interaction with other animals. In whales, dolphins or porpoises,



disturbance can be indicated by rapid changes in swimming direction or speed, erratic swimming patterns, tail slapping, or attempt by female to shield her calf from the source of the disturbance.

## Sea Birds

- Some of Alaska's seabirds are already depleted and highly stressed, apparently due to a shortage of food.
- Seabird colonies are vulnerable to reproductive failure as a result of disturbance. Stay far enough away from nesting areas to avoid flushing the birds. When birds take flight in groups or waves rather than individually, they are disturbed and you are too close. Frightened birds leaving the nest can inadvertently knock their own eggs off the ledge. Even very brief absence of the parents exposes the eggs or chicks to excessive heat or cold, and to predation by gulls and ravens.
- Never blast horns or make other loud noises in the vicinity of seabird nests.
- Avoid running your boat through flocks of feeding or resting birds on the water. The prey ball of schooling fish, often created by diving seabirds, may be dispursed, causing loss of important time and energy for feeding birds.
- If you walk on beaches or cliffs, be careful to avoid crushing burrowed nests and concealed nests in the grass.
- Avoid visiting critical seabird nesting areas, like Jackpot, Seal, Smith, Channel, and Applegate Rocks, to minimize disturbance.
- Sea ducks, including harlequins, begin molting in July, leaving them unable to fly. Displacing them from their shelter and feeding areas quickly depletes their energy reserves. If you spot sea ducks, maneuver your boat well around them instead of forcing them to move.





# OPERATING TIPS

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## Tips For Power Boaters While Underway

- Scan the water back and forth constantly for logs, submerged and exposed rocks, shallow areas, kayaks and other small boats. This becomes especially important when facing into the sun, when in fog, in conditions with rough water or restricted visibility, when rounding points, or when navigating narrow winding passages.
  - Slow down and minimize your wake when approaching paddlers, small boats, or beached boats.
  - Fatigue, like hypothermia, can lead to accidents. On extended cruises on larger boats, rotate jobs or seating positions on the boat to maintain alertness. On small boats, change routes or speed as needed to minimize pounding and the resulting fatigue. Share tasks with others on your boat so that everyone can take an active part in the voyage.
  - Anchorages may be used by several boats, so be considerate and give the others room. Allow plenty of “swing room” in case the wind shifts. If you are the first in an anchorage, position your boat so that others may anchor safely there too. Calculate the tidal range in the anchorage so that you are not stranded on a rocky shore at low tide.
- Respect the peace of the anchorage by refraining from playing loud music or shouting, and running generators as little as possible.





## Tips For Paddlers

- Strive for high visibility when around power boats. Wear bright clothing that can be seen easily by other boaters at a distance.
- Avoid power-boat traffic lanes.
- Travel in groups. In the event of a capsized, self rescue is difficult if you are alone. Groups of boats are also more easily seen than are single boats.

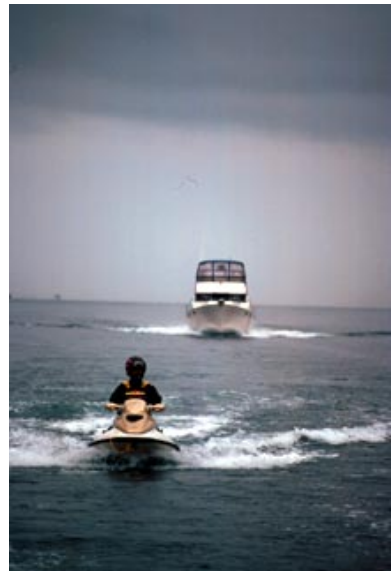


- When on the beach, move your boat well above the high tide line and tie it securely. Many a paddler has returned to their boat only to discover it floated away on a high tide or was swamped by a boat wake breaking on the beach.

## Tips for Personal Watercraft

- Abide by regulatory markers such as No Wake zones and speed limit signs.
- The operator is responsible for the boat's wake.
- Avoid operating in the same area for extended periods.
- Always fasten the emergency cut-off lanyard to you.
- NEVER loan a PWC to an inexperienced operator.

Check with the appropriate land manager about any closures or other restrictions. For example, the inner lagoon at Shoup Bay is closed to PWC.



# COMMUNICATIONS

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Communications are unreliable in the Sound, mostly due to the mountainous terrain. Although the Coast Guard has seven marine VHF repeater sites in the Sound, there are still “dead zones” where the VHF signal is spotty or completely blocked. See the brochure *Prince William Sound Communications* published by the US Coast Guard for a graphic illustration of coverage.

If you are having difficulty transmitting, try another location or, if you have a handheld, higher ground.

Vessels equipped with VHF-FM radio are required to monitor Ch 16 at all times, but that channel can be used only for hailing or emergency broadcasts. All other conversations have to be conducted on “working” channels.

At this time, cellular phone service in Western Prince William Sound is very limited. The only public phone is located at Armin Koernig hatchery.



# GETTING HELP

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The boater is responsible for his/her own safety. In Alaska, boaters must have sufficient equipment and ability to handle common boating emergencies, particularly in remote areas like Prince William Sound.

Most of the time a rescue unit will be NOT be close at hand in the event you need help. The nearest Coast Guard helicopters are in Cordova and Kodiak. Private boats operated by Coast Guard Auxiliary members are on the water during summer weekends, but may not be in all areas of the Sound. This is especially true in April/May and September/October when there are even fewer boaters and potential rescuers in the Sound. This is why a marine VHF radio is highly recommended.

## In an Emergency

If a threat to life exists, call for help by VHF radio; tune to Ch. 16 and broadcast a “MAYDAY”. Provide your vessel name, your position (latitude-longitude), vessel description, nature of distress, and number of persons on board. (See the *Alaska Boater’s Handbook* for detailed instructions on making a distress call). In an emergency, broadcast your message even if you cannot hear a response.

By telephone or cell phone, contact the Coast Guard by pressing \*CG, or call 1-800-478-5555 or 1-888-399-5555.

## Non-Emergency

In a **non-emergency** situation, such as out of fuel or mechanical breakdown, use Ch. 16 on your VHF radio, and issue a “PAN-PAN”. Or, if you are in an area with service, use your cell phone to contact the Coast Guard for assistance. The Coast Guard will want the same information from you as in a distress call, but then will issue a Maritime Assistance Request Broadcast (MARB). In that case the Coast Guard Auxiliary, another boater, or a commercial towing service, may respond.

Neither the Coast Guard nor Auxiliary is required to provide a tow in non-emergency situations. If they do offer to tow you they are not required to take you to your destination or originating port, only to the nearest safe haven. The Coast Guard Auxiliary is a volunteer organization that includes boat owners who

have been trained by the Coast Guard to provide a wide variety of services for boaters such as general vessel assistance and search and rescue. They are experienced and knowledgeable about local conditions, and are a good source of information. Their vessels are private pleasure craft, however, and are not designed for heavy weather rescue. Captains and crews are volunteers paying their own expenses, so don't make unreasonable demands of them. On week-ends from May to September, Auxiliary trained crews and vessels are usually in the Sound, but their presence cannot be assumed. Auxiliary vessels identify themselves on the radio by the designation "Coast Guard Auxiliary Vessel" followed by six digits. They fly an orange and white flag and display side panels reading "U.S.C.G. Auxiliary Patrol."

Other boaters and employees of government agencies, such as Dept. of Public Safety, Alaska State Parks, US Forest Service and the US Fish and Wildlife Service will generally respond to calls for assistance if they are in the vicinity.

The Whittier Harbormaster does not perform services outside the harbor, and remote sites such as fish hatcheries prefer not to be called for routine assistance. Unless called upon by the Coast Guard, hatchery employees are not permitted to leave the immediate vicinity to assist other vessels. However, hatchery personnel will call the Coast Guard for vessels needing assistance.

If you accept commercial assistance, that towing company will provide assistance and will charge you. You can also get help by calling directly to one of the towing services listed in the back of this publication. You cannot be forced to accept a commercial tow but if you decline, you may find yourself on our own.

# RECOMMENDED READING

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*Alaska Boater's Handbook*, published annually by the State Office of Boating Safety

*Alaska Marine Mammal Viewing Guidelines* published by National Marine Fisheries Service <http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/>

*Accessing Alaska's Public Lands & Waters* published by Alaska Dept. of Natural Resources and Dept. of Fish and Game.

*Cruising Guide to Prince William Sound*, by Nancy and Jim Lethcoe

*Federal Requirements and Safety Tips for Recreational Boats*

*Leave No Trace - Outdoor Skills & Ethics - Temperate Coastal Zones* by the National Outdoor Leadership School

*Power Vessel Operator & Kayaker Suggested Guidelines for Safe Operations in Alaska*, published by the Alaska Wilderness Recreation and Tourism Association and the Coast Guard Marine Safety Office.

*Prince William Sound Alaska - travel safely - wisely - lightly* published by USDA Forest Service, Chugach National Forest

*Prince William Sound Communications - United States Coast Guard VHF-FM Radio coverage* published by the US Coast Guard.

*Water Wise – Safety for the Recreational Boater* by Jerry Dzugan and Susan Clark Jensen and published by University of Alaska Sea Grant and the U.S. Marine Safety Association.



# CONTACTS

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## Emergency

### Coast Guard

VHF Ch. 16

Tel. or cell phone - \*CG, 1-800-478-5555 or 1-888-399-5555

HF/SSB- 4125 MHz or 2182 MHz

### Alaska State Troopers

VHF Ch. 16

Tel. 911

## Non-Emergency

### Alaska State Troopers

VHF Ch. 16

Tel (non-emergency) – (907) 269-5601

### Fish & Wildlife Protection

VHF Ch. 16

Tel. (907) 269-5509

### Whittier Harbormaster

VHF Ch. 16 or 68

Tel. (907) 472-2330

Email: [wharbor@alaska.net](mailto:wharbor@alaska.net)

Pollution Hotline: 1-800-424-8802

### Coast Guard VHF Ch. 22

### Weather

National Weather Service

VHF Ch. WX 1, 2 or 3

HF/SSB 4125 MHz.

KDG 91 Yakutat at 0515, 1930, or

KWL 38 Kodiak at 0800 and 1900

Weatherfax 2054, 4298 and 8459 KHz  
(upper sideband)

Alaska Weatherline 1-800-472-0391

Internet: [www.alaska.net/~nwsar/](http://www.alaska.net/~nwsar/)

### Fuel

Whittier Shoreside Petroleum Inc.  
472-2314

Valdez North Pacific Fuel 835-4850  
Valdez Fuel Dock 835-4337

Cordova Novak's Fuel 424-3800  
Orca Oil 424-3264  
Sound Fuel 424-5860

### Boat Towing

#### Whittier

Dew Drop Charters 472-2391

Arlen Arneson 472-2441

Honey Charters 472-2493,  
344-3340

Lazy Otter Charters 472-6887,  
345-3775

TowBOAT/US "Quick Tow"  
472-2440,  
529-9072

## Resource Managers

### U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Tel. (907) 786-3800 (sea otters)  
271-2888 (critical habitat)

### U.S.D.A Forest Service

Tel. (907) 783-3242 (Glacier District)  
424-7661 (Cordova District)  
VHF Ch. 16, vessel “Orca Chief”,  
“Williwaw” or “Seamaster”

### Alaska State Parks, PWS District

Tel. (907) 262-5581  
VHF Ch. 16, vessel “Naiad 1

### Alaska Department of Fish and Game

Anchorage Tel. 267-2100  
Cordova Tel. 424-3212

### National Marine Fisheries Service

Tel. (907) 586-7225 (NOAA enf.)  
271-5006 (field office)

## Boating Safety

### Alaska State Office of Boating Safety

Tel. (907) 269-8705  
<http://www.alaskaboatingsafety.org/>

### U.S. Coast Guard 17<sup>th</sup> District

Boating Safety Coordinator  
Tel. (907) 463-2297

## Municipalities

Chenega Bay 573-5132  
Cordova 424-6200  
Tatitlek 325-2311

Valdez 835-4313  
Whittier 472-2327

## Other

Alaska Railroad 265-2300

Alaska Recreation Management  
(Whittier parking) 522-8368

Clearwater Environmental  
(Whittier parking) 522-3638

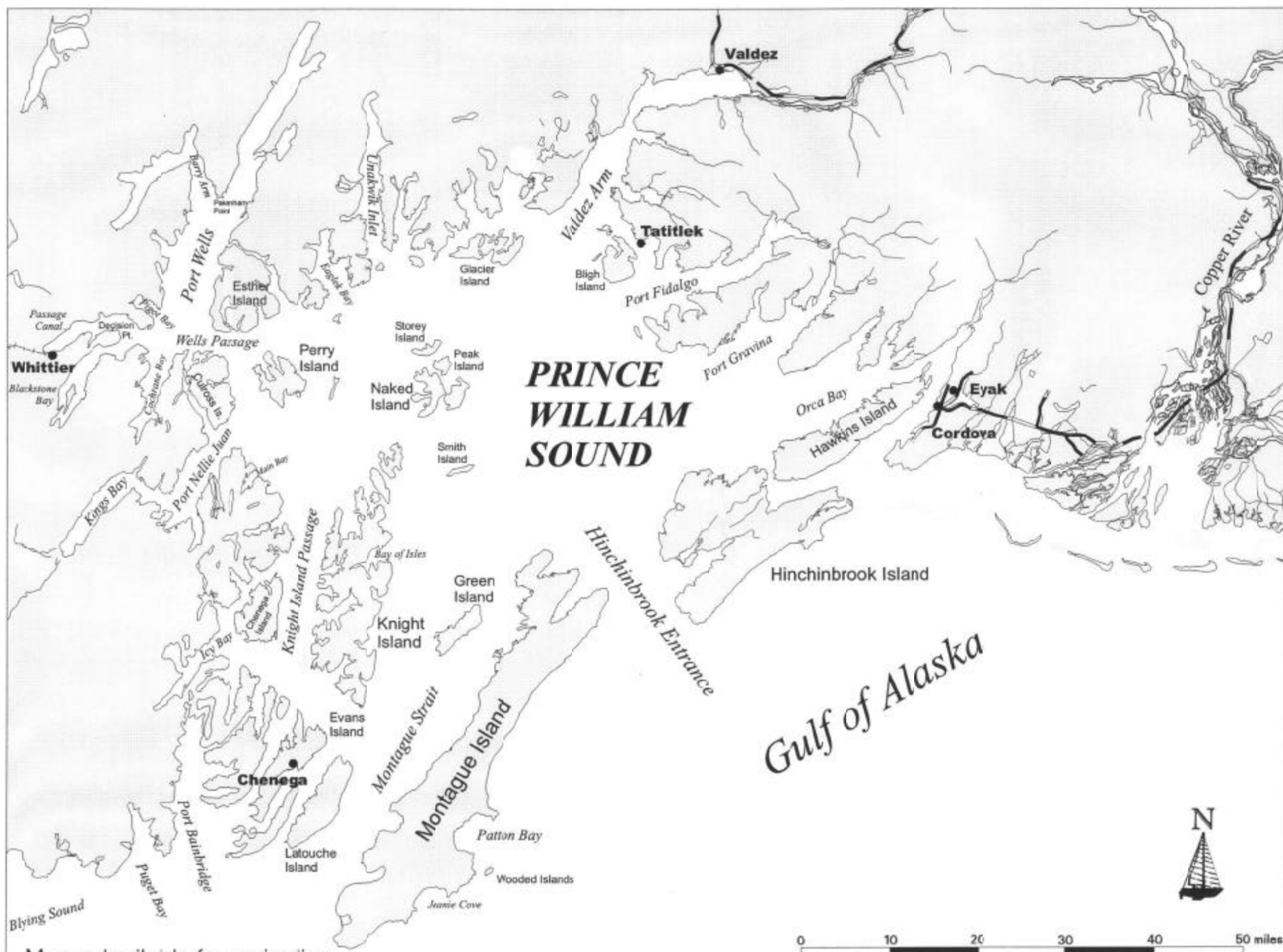
Alaska Wilderness Recreation and  
Tourism Association 258-3171

Chugach Alaska Corp. 563-8866



**State of Alaska**  
**Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation**  
**Office of Boating Safety**  
**550 W. 7th #1380**  
**Anchorage, AK 99501-3561**





**PRINCE  
WILLIAM  
SOUND**

*Gulf of Alaska*

Map not suitable for navigation.

